

# Are California's Registered Independents Shy Partisans?

December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015

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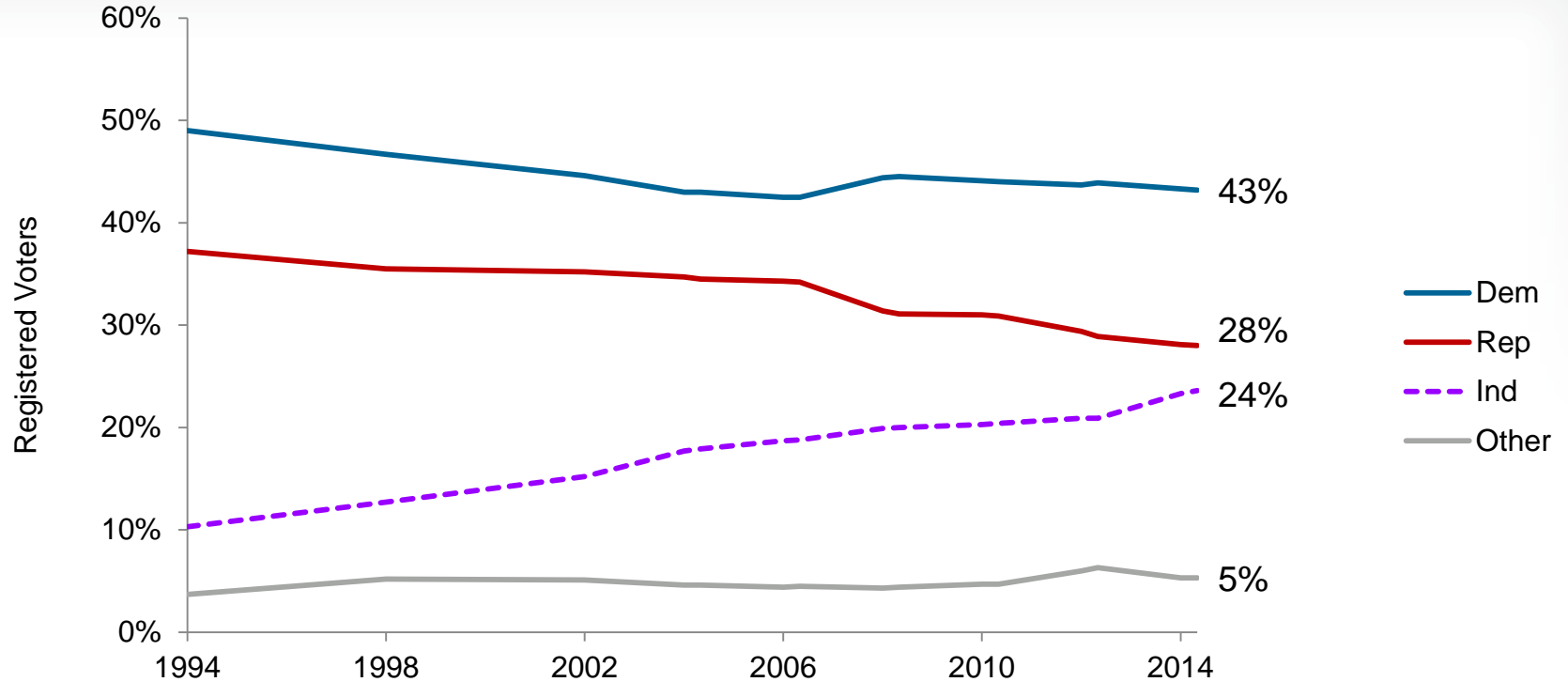
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**PPIC**

PUBLIC POLICY  
INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

# Independent Registration on the Rise



# Research on Independent Identifiers

“Independents, defined inclusively, have little in common. They are more diverse than either Republicans or Democrats. Most of them are not uncommitted, and they are not a bloc. They are largely closet Democrats and Republicans.”

- *Myth of the Independent Voter (Keith, et al., 1992)*
- Can we say the same about registered independents?

# Data and Methods

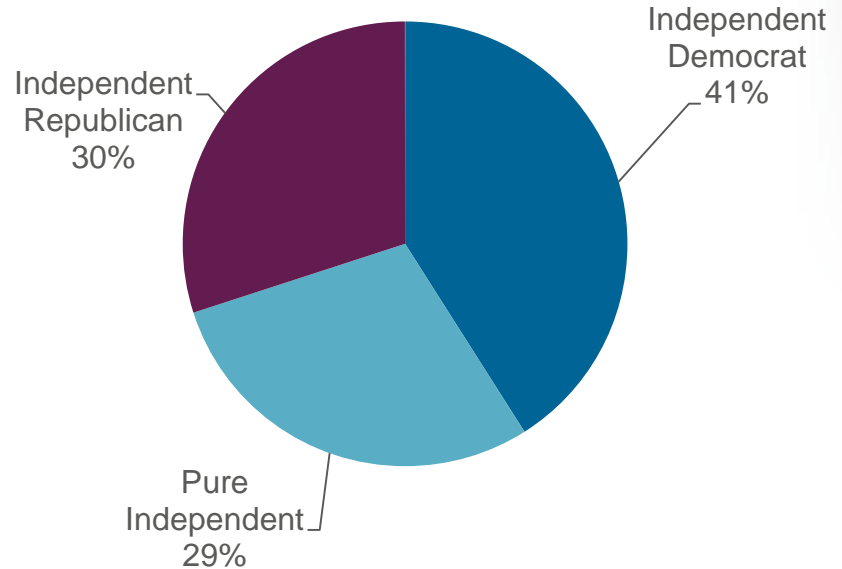
- Public Policy Institute of California's periodic statewide surveys
- Survey data from 7 rounds conducted during 2015
  - n-size for analysis varies (noted on slides)
- Registration typology questions
  - Registration status and party
  - Strong/weak partisan
  - Partisan leaning
  - 7 categories, including pure independents who do not lean
- Compare survey responses

# Composition of Registered Voters in PPIC Surveys

Registration Group	Share of All Registered Voters
Strong Democrat	23%
Weak Democrat	19%
Independent Democrat	10%
Pure Independent	7%
Independent Republican	7%
Weak Republican	13%
Strong Republican	14%
Other/Don't Know Party	9%

N=9,446

## Among Registered Independents

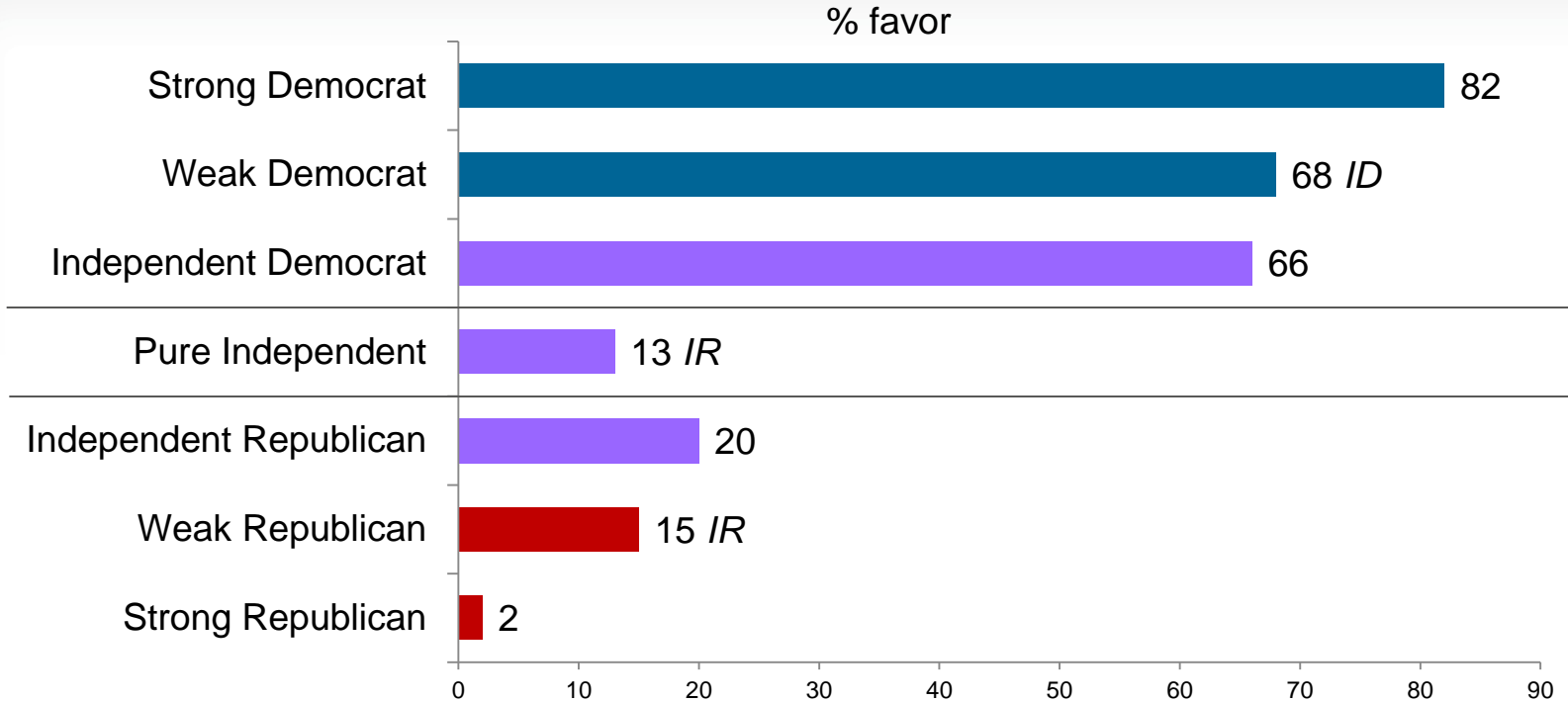


N=2,558

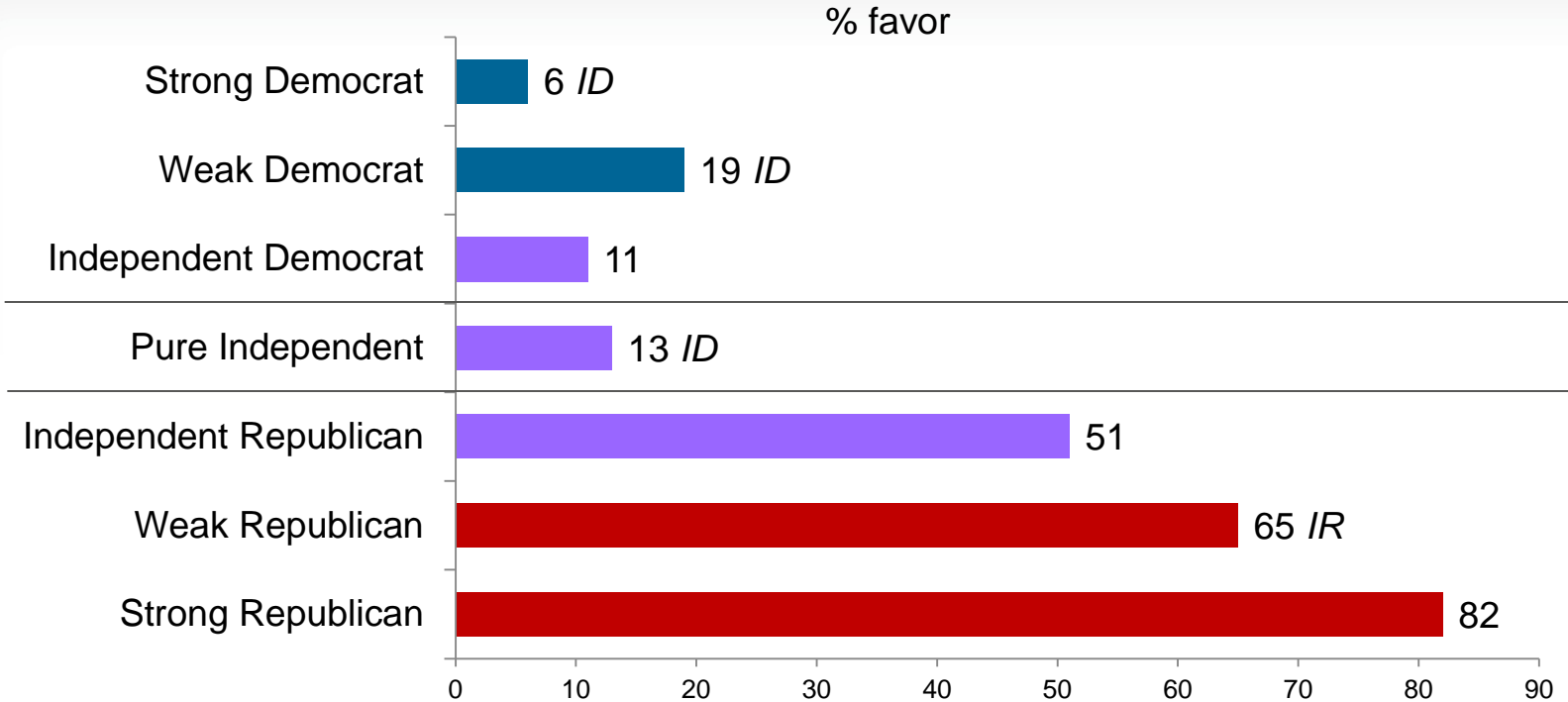
# Survey Responses Considered

- Party attitudes
- Political ideology
- Policy preferences
  
- Looking for...
  - Differences among independent groups
  - Similarities between independents and registered partisans

# Favorable Impression of the Democratic Party



# Favorable Impression of the Republican Party

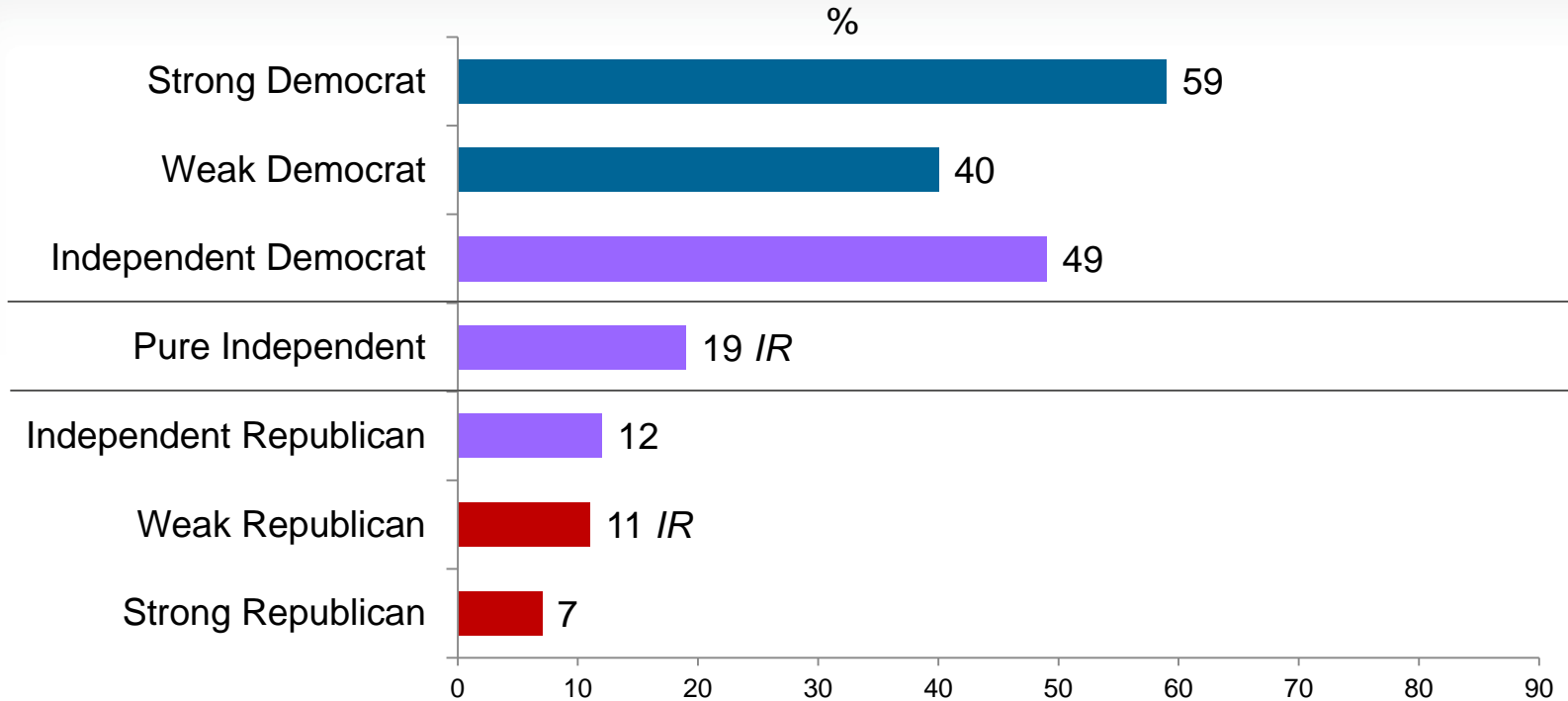




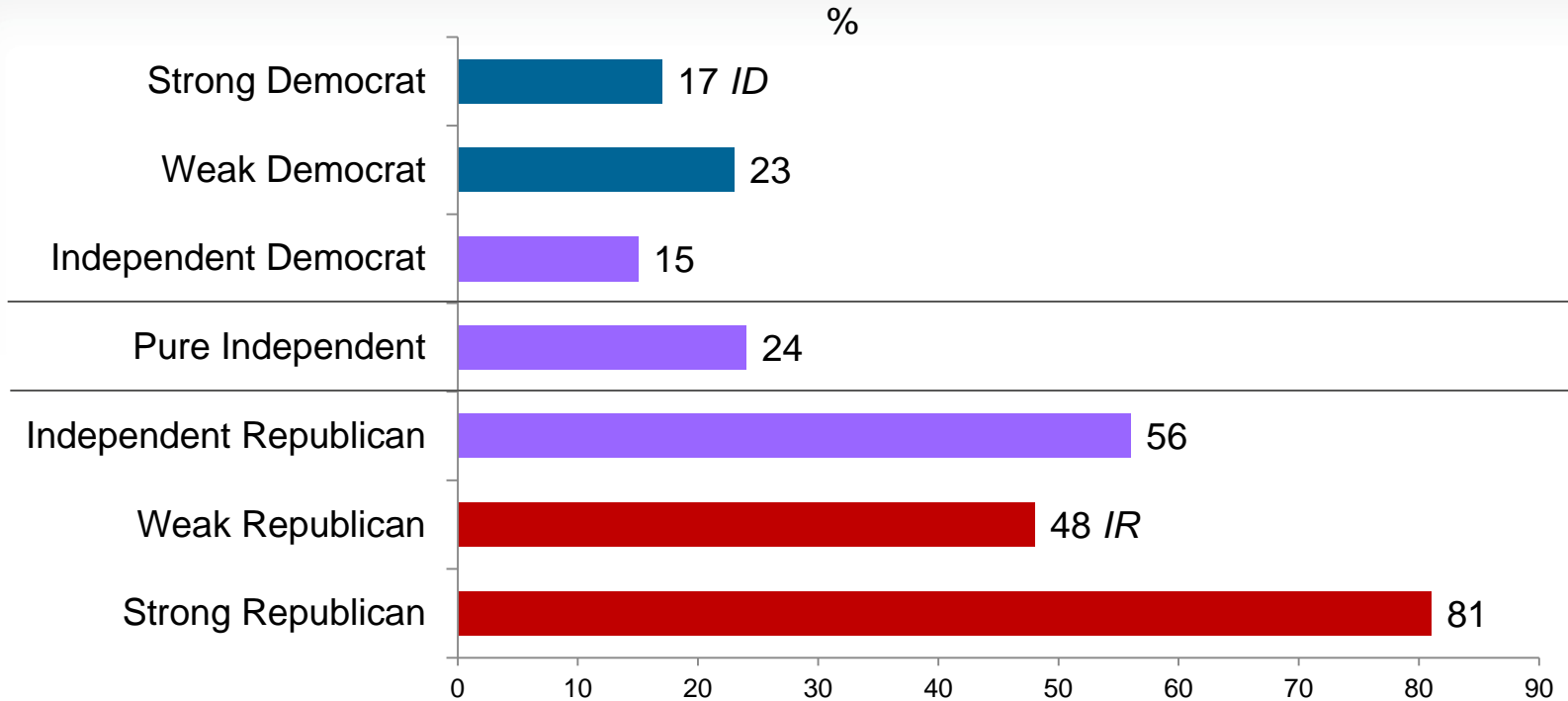
# Political Ideology

- Would you consider yourself to be politically: very liberal, somewhat liberal, middle-of-the-road, somewhat conservative, or very conservative?
- Seven 2015 surveys, group n-sizes range from 774 to 2,442

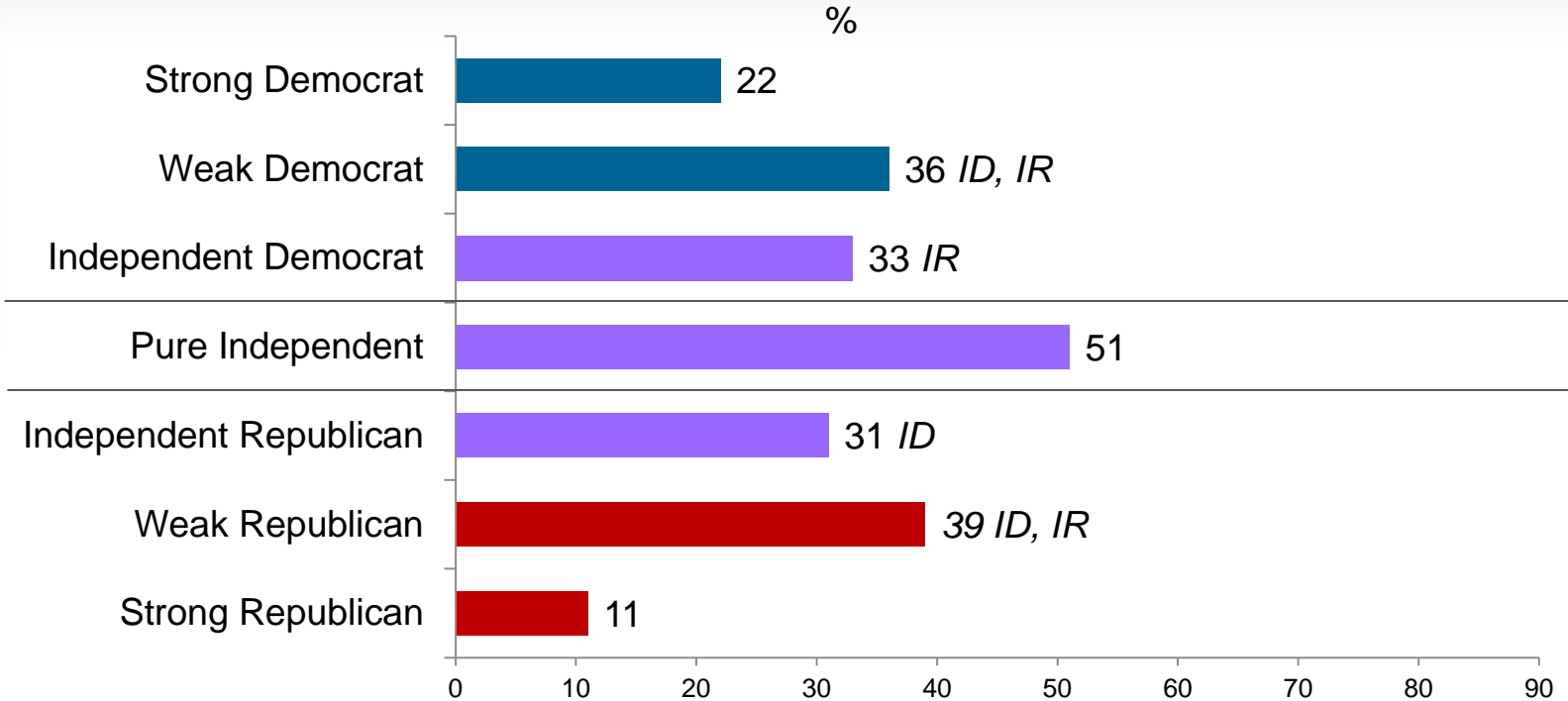
# Very liberal or somewhat liberal



# Very conservative or somewhat conservative



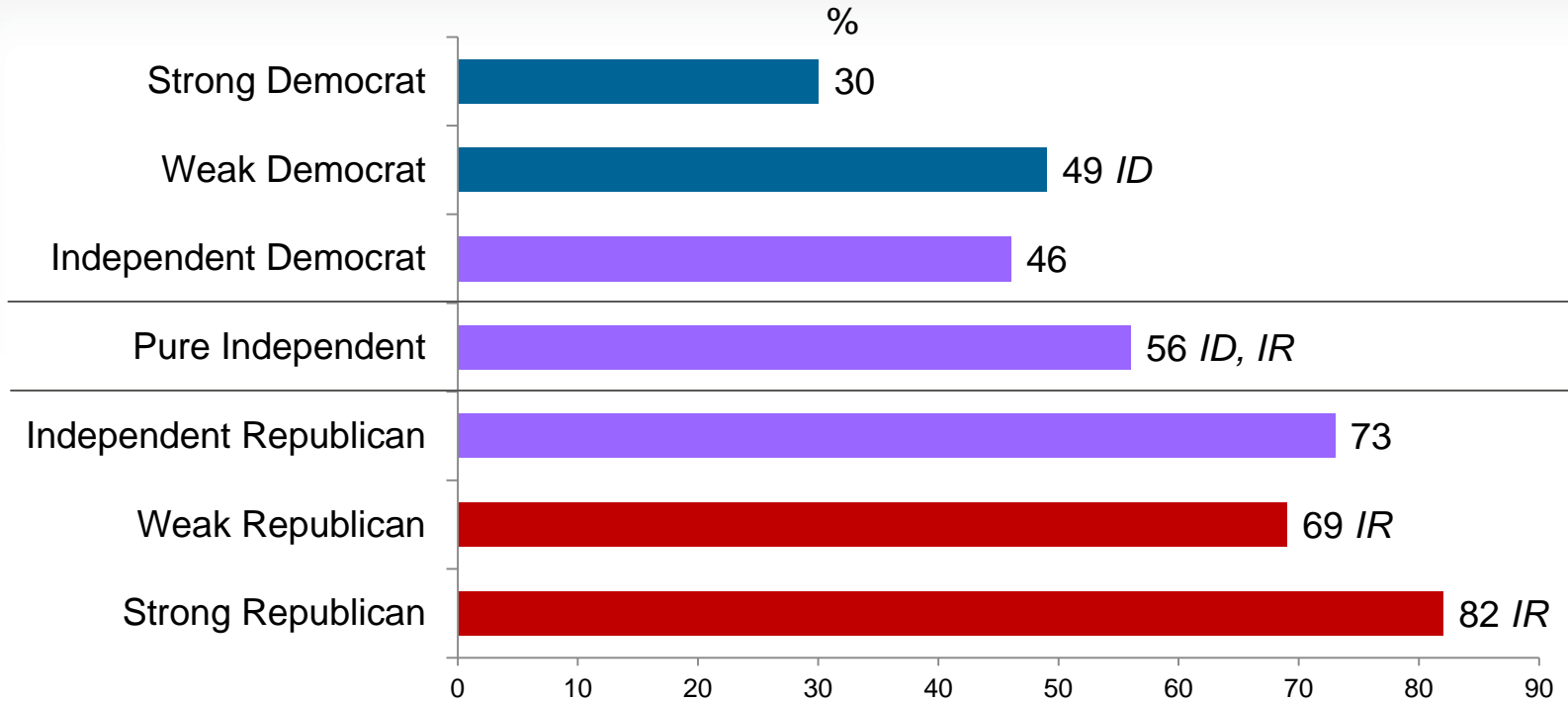
# Middle-of-the-road



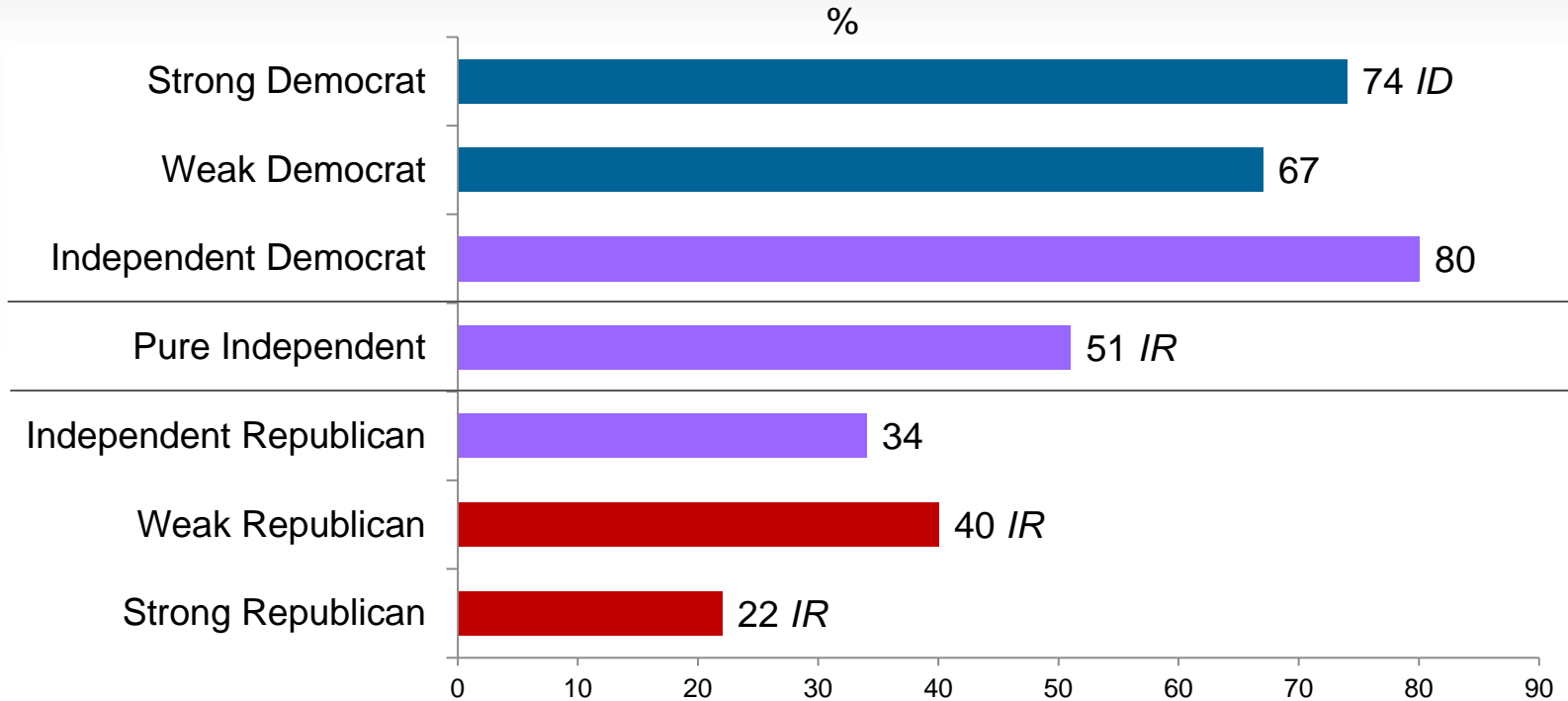
# Policy Preferences

- Four policy areas: spending priorities, immigration, energy taxation, marijuana
- 2015 surveys, group n-size ranges from 188 to 693
- Groups differ, and partisan leaning is a reliable guide

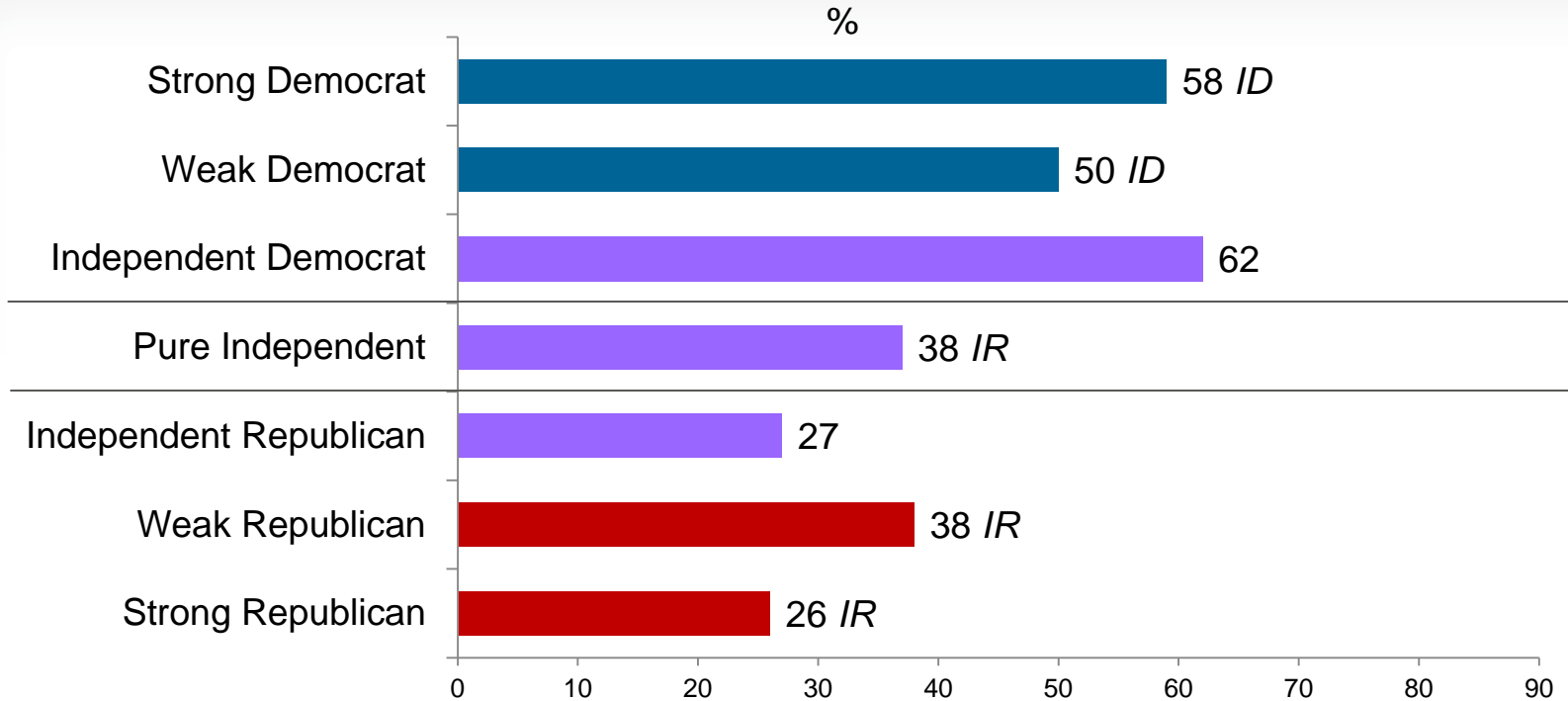
# Prefer paying down debt and building up reserve



# Immigrants are a benefit to California



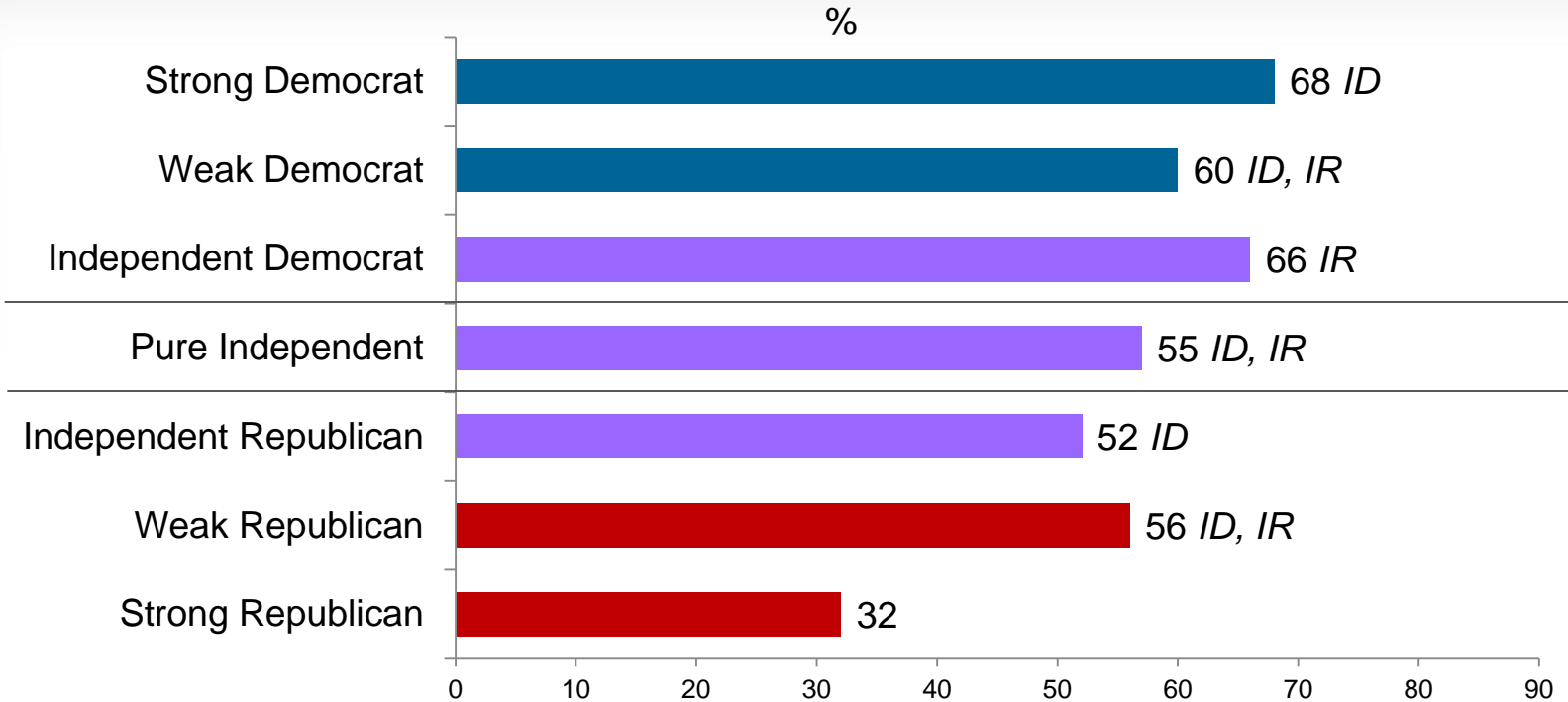
# Tax extraction of oil and natural gas



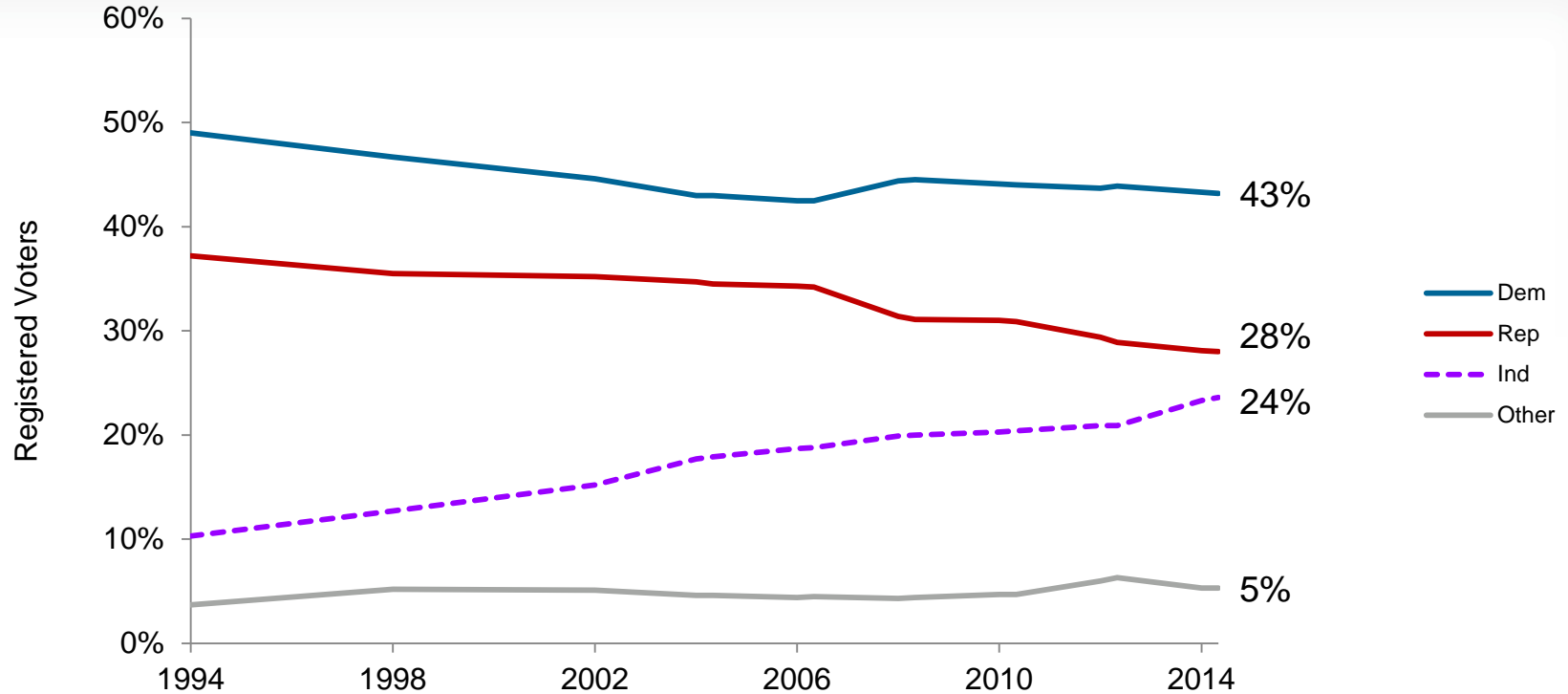
*ID* indicates group statistically similar to independent Democrats  
*IR* indicates group statistically similar to independent Republicans



# Use of marijuana should be legal



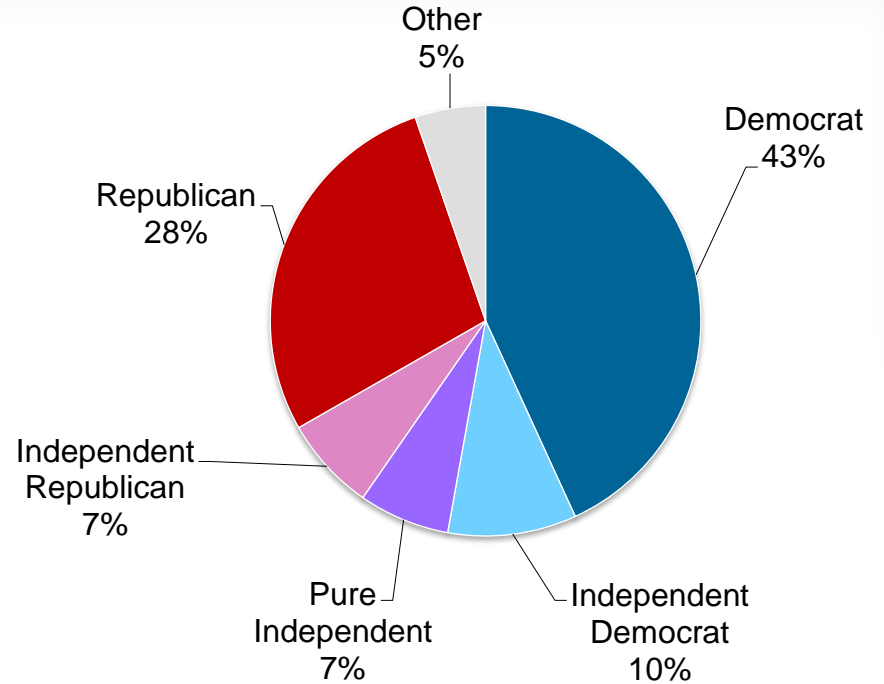
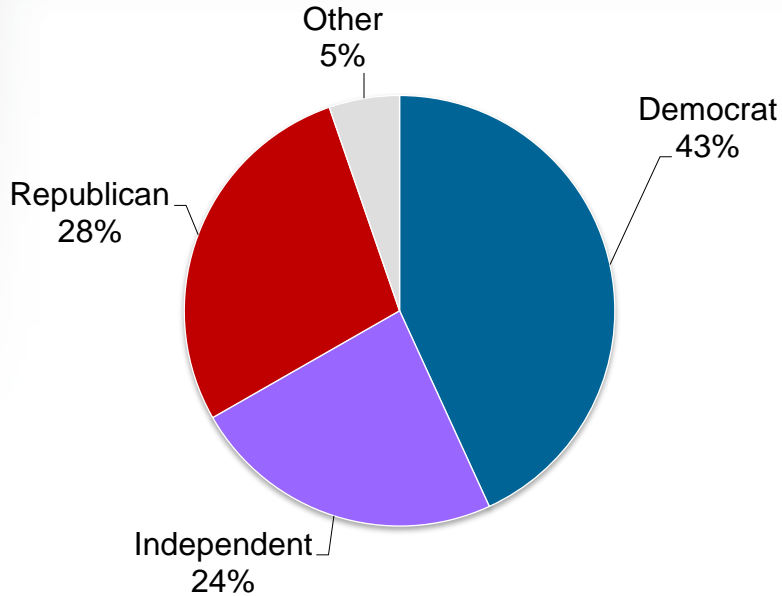
# Independent Registration on the Rise



# What We Found

- Independents consistently align with the party they lean toward, and often differ significantly from independents with different partisan leanings
- Independents are not more moderate as a rule, but often appear so when leaners and pure independents are combined
- Partisan leaning question can be used to sort out differences

# Understanding Registered Independents



# Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.